

Facts of Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)

- Hantavirus infection can cause a rare, but severe, sometimes fatal respiratory disease in humans.
- In the San Luis Valley the virus is carried by the deer mouse



Characteristics of Deer mice:

- tawny backs
- white belly
- big ears & eyes
- may be larger than average household mice

- The virus is found in the droppings, urine &/or saliva of infected rodents
- The virus is transmitted to humans by breathing

contaminated dust. This is most often caused by stirring up dust which contains infected rodent droppings, urine, or saliva. Dust can also be disturbed during cleaning, removing rodent traps, entering crawl spaces, sheds, barns, & and wood piles. Other ways to become infected include rodent bites, touching eyes, nose or mouth after touching materials contaminated with the virus.

- The virus can remain infectious for 2-3 days at room temperature. Exposure to sunlight, ultraviolet light can reduce that time. Freezing temperatures will extend the life of the virus.
- The virus does not affect household pets.
- The virus is not spread from person to person.

What are Symptoms of HPS?

- Symptoms usually start 1 to 6 weeks after exposure.
- Early symptoms include fever, headaches, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, dizziness, chills, and muscle aches (usually in the large muscles of the hips, thighs, back or shoulders).
- Late symptoms include cough, shortness of breath (sometimes described as feeling of band around chest or pillow over the face).
- Late symptoms typically appear within 4-10 days after early symptoms.
- **If you develop fever, headache or muscle pain within 6 weeks of being exposed to rodents, their droppings, saliva or urine seek medical care immediately.**

How can I reduce my risk of exposure?

- Plug all holes (dime size or larger) in walls, pipes (electrical, plumbing & gas), vents, and crawl spaces both inside and outside with steel wool or metal sheeting.
- Repair window screens and ensure weather stripping under doors is tight (including pet doors).
- Store pet and livestock food or birdseed in containers with tight fitting lids.
- Keep garbage in tightly covered containers.

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- Store any food in a secure closed cabinet, and any open food packages in a tightly closing container.
- Store hay, wood, and equipment at least 100 feet from house.
- Remove old cars, junk, and brush piles from the yard.
- Use snap traps baited with peanut butter. Avoid live, glue, or poison traps they increase exposure risk.

How do I clean up safely?

- Before attempting to clean up, open doors and windows for at least 1 hour to air out space.
- Wear rubber gloves and spray droppings, nests, carcasses and other contaminated materials with bleach water solution (1 ½ cups bleach to 1 gallon water) and let soak for 5-10 minutes before beginning clean up.
- **Do Not Sweep or Vacuum droppings, nests or other contaminated materials.**
- Use a respirator mask (N100 rating) when cleaning.
- After disinfecting, place any rodent carcasses, nests, and cleaning materials into a plastic bag. Seal bag tightly and place in an outdoor trash receptacle.
- Always wash hands with soap and water after clean-up of any possibly contaminated site or material.

Where can I get more information?

- Local Public Health Agency: Alamosa- 719-589-6639; Rio Grande- 719-657-3352; Conejos-719-274-4307; Costilla- 719-672-3332; Saguache- 719-655-2533 or 719-754-2773; Mineral-719-658-2416.
- Center for Disease Control (CDC) 1-800-262-4636 or 1-888-232-6348 or online at www.cdc.gov/hantavirus
- Colorado Department of Public Health www.cdphe.state.co.us . In the health topics section A-Z, locate Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome.



Rio Grande County Public Health
Contact Emily Brown, Director
719-657-3352

Saguache County Public Health
Contact Della Vieira, Director
719-655-2533

